

September 14, 2005- Rahall Denounces Ruling On Pledge

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WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) called U.S. District Judge Lawrence Carlton's ruling of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools unconstitutional "a sucker-punch to patriotism" and urged the courts to overrule the decision.

U.S. District Judge Lawrence Carlton ruled that the pledge's reference to one nation "under God" violates school children's' right to be "free from a coercive requirement to affirm God" and granted legal standing to two families reprinted by an atheist who lost his previous battle before the Supreme Court.

"The recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance is a time-honored tradition," Rahall said. "It teaches children at a young age, in terms they can understand, about the values which our country was founded on-Christianity, liberty, and justice for all. For well over two hundred years the moral fiber of this Nation has been built not upon the law of man, but rather upon the law of God. To take the element of faith out of our pledge would be censorship of history."

Karlton said he was bound by precedent of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which in 2002 ruled in favor of Sacramento atheist Michael Newdow that the pledge is unconstitutional when recited in public schools.

Newdow, an attorney and medical doctor, filed an identical case on behalf of three unnamed parents and thier children.

"We know that nine out of ten Americans support keeping the Pledge of Allegiance in schools. Congress unanimously added the words "under God" in the pledge back in 1954," Rahall said. "This is hardly a discordant issue and the desires of the misguided few will not win out over the hearts of the many."

The Becket Fund, a religious rights group that is a party to the case, said it would immediately appeal the case to the San Francisco-based 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. If the Court does not change its precedent, the group would go to the Supreme Court.

"It is the responsibility of our Republican leadership in Washington, not of our local transportation officials, to study our nation's energy strategy and offer productive alternatives," Rahall said. "Every minute of time our education officials have to spend dealing with this problem is a minute taken away from their jobs, which means it's a minute taken away from our youth. We can afford this no more than we can afford paying more than three dollars for a gallon of gas."

Rahall said that in the wake of Katrina America got a first-hand look at the vulnerability of the oil industry.

"Any disruption in the supply chain is going to have disastrous consequences until the administration gives this problem the attention it deserves," Rahall said. "Opening the reserves may stabilize prices, but they will still be higher than they should and the relief will be temporary. These prices didn't rise overnight and they won't drop overnight either. I hope the administration takes this opportunity to examine and repair the bigger picture."

Rahall has proposed many different options for alleviating the pressure of high gas prices on the people of southern West Virginia. He is a proponent of alternative fuels to gasoline, especially coal-based fuels including liquid or gaseous coal-based fuels. Rahall has also urged the Administration to conduct an investigation into the possibility of price fixing by the Big Oil companies.

He supports a new plan unveiled Wednesday to combat price gouging. The plan would give the Federal Trade Commission added authority to prosecute oil companies.

Not only does this proposal impose tough penalties on companies that cheat consumers, but fines for price-gouging would be used to provide relief to consumers for high energy prices in the form of a Consumer Relief Trust Fund, to be used to expand the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) or to provide relief to consumers paying record prices at the pump.